Silicon Times Report

The Original Independent OnLine Magazine"
(Since 1987)

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Computer Xmas Sales Weak
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The Publisher, Staff & Editors

Florida Lotto - LottoMan v1.35
Results: 12/28/96: 3 of 6 numbers, 3 three number matches

From the Editor’s Desk...

How about those Gators!! Now, I guess those sad jokes coming from Coach Bowden will abate. In any case, Florida’s number one industry still seems to be the production of first class Football players and teams.

As with all things. Changes are inevitable. The familiar way to reach the STReport support BBS is undergoing sweeping changes. Next week, you’ll be able to reach the BBS and all our files, back issues etc., via telnet. The routers are in, the lines are in. Now, all that’s left to the final configurations is to make the gateway to the net reliable. We are using 3Com networking hardware exclusively. the systems are using 3Com XL 100 NICs and a pair of Hubs. The entire network is connected with RJ45 twisted pairs. The Routers are 3Com 530u units. The actual server for the support duties is a 166 Pentium with 10gb of storage, 32 mb ram, running Windows NT 4.0. That should do the job very nicely. Its safe to say, once all the "wrinkles" are ironed out it will be available 24-7. We will post the addresses etc., as soon as everything is solid.

Can you believe we’ve been doing STReport for TEN years? This year, 1997, is STReport’s tenth anniversary year. It all started as a very humble newsletter for the Atari computers in 1987 and now we are a very humble, but highly informative weekly magazine. All our back issues will be available at our support site. Stay tuned for all developments as they occur.

Ralph...

Of Special Note:

http//www.streport.com

STReport is now ready to offer much more in the way of serving the Networks, Online Services and Internet's vast, fast growing site list and userbase. We now have our very own WEB/NewsGroup/FTP Site and although it is in its early stages of construction, do stop by and have a look see. Since We've received numerous requests to receive STReport from a wide variety of Internet addressees, we were compelled to put together an Internet distribution/mailing list for those who wished to receive STReport on a regular basis, the file is ZIPPED, then UUENCODED. Unfortunately, we've also received a number of opinions that the UUENCODING was a real pain to deal with. So, as of October 01, 1995, you'll be able to download STReport directly from our very own SERVER & WEB Site. While there, be sure to join our STR AutoMailer list.

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Dana P. Jacobson, Editor, Current Affairs

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STReport Headline News

LATE BREAKING INDUSTRY-WIDE NEWS

Weekly Happenings in the Computer World

Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Internet: Year’s Top Tech Story

The top technology news story of 1996 was the Internet, says the nation’s leading tech writers, and the Net probably will be the top tech story of the new year as well, they add. Reporting from San Francisco, United Press International notes the California business communications firm Wilson McHenry interviewed the 25 most influential technology journalists as listed in the publication Marketing Computers.

"It says their verdict that the Internet dominated their beat this year and would do again in 1997 was unanimous," UPI reports. Wilson McHenry says everyone talks about the Internet, and that will keep up in the year to come, "but with a sharper focus on how to turn the information superhighway into a marketplace," adds the wire service.

Here’s Why the Program Is Late

Ace technology columnist Gene Emery notes "Promises, Promises" could be the theme song of the software business, since companies regularly must delay release of new products beyond the promised debut, usually because bugs have cropped up. Writing for the Reuter News Service, Emery notes VR Sports (which originally promised to release its "VR Baseball" game in 1995), has come up with a "Top Ten" list to explain why we may not see the game until the first pitch this spring.

The reasons, listed in reverse order, a la the David Letterman Show, are:

1. Marketing is complaining there isn’t enough blood and guts in the game.
2. An EA virus has been detected in VR Baseball which causes players to purposely throw a game.
3. Have not been able to get the game to boot since implementing the "Players’ Strike" feature.
4. Two words: Nomo Mania.
5. There was a setback in testing because many of the testers were using illegally corked joysticks.
6. It takes way too many polygons to represent major-league umpires.
7. Stupidly hired "Codeless" Joe Jackson as lead programmer.
8. Many programmers were found aimlessly roaming through corn fields saying, "If you program it, it will crash."
9. Programmers and artists can’ continue without a collective bargaining agreement.
10. Took too long to abandon the "We can save money by using the old source code for Pong" theory.

Encryption Plan Comes Next Week

The final version of the federal government’s new policy on export of computer encoding products will be unveiled next week, and insiders say the plan is not likely to mollify the software industry and privacy advocates who objected to the first draft. Reporting from Washington, Aaron Pressman of the Reuter News Service says some changes were made in the final rules, available Friday at a government printing office, from the earlier draft, "but the bulk of the proposal remains the same, including portions strongly criticized by the software industry that applied to real-time communications."

Undersecretary William Reinsch of the U.S. Commerce Department said two

weeks ago the draft rules would be modestly revised, but warned that some objections could not be addressed. The old rules, dating from the Cold war, allow the administration to severely limit the export of products containing encryption, programs that use mathematical formulas to scramble information and render it unreadable without a password or software "key."

The new Commerce Department rules were intended as a compromise, allowing U.S. companies to compete in the encryption market while protecting the interests of law enforcement officials. "The policy relies on so-called key recovery features which allow government officials to decode encrypted messages when acting under proper legal authority," says Pressman. "Under the policy to be issued Monday, products containing key recovery features will be eligible for export after a one-time review."

Reuters notes software firms had hoped the key recovery exception would only apply to stored data, like a document on a hard drive, "but," says the wire service, "the final rules, like the draft rules, also require key recovery for real-time data transmission such as coded phone calls." The new rules say non-key recovery software with keys of up to 56 bits will be exportable under six-month, renewable licenses until the end of 1998, but only if the manufacturer commits to producing software with key recovery by then.

Also, all other encryption products, such as state-of-the art 128-bit software without key recovery features, would continue to be treated as munitions. "Such products include ordinary e-mail programs and even the recently introduced set-top box for surfing the Internet with a television," Pressman reports.

Bernstein Renews Encryption Row

Chicago college professor Dan Bernstein is set to square against the U.S. government again next month on the subject of computer encryption. Bernstein is set to teach a course on encryption Jan. 13 at the University of Chicago, but United Press International notes new federal regulations may require that he clear this with the government.

The professor acknowledges that new U.S. Commerce Department regulations restricting computer encryption -- published over the Christmas holidays and put into immediate effect this week -- might be violated by his class. Bernstein told the wire service he thinks the Commerce Department regulations are substantially the same as State Department regulations ruled unconstitutional in a Dec. 6 decision by federal Judge Marilyn Hall Patel, who ruled the controls were too broad.

Attorney Cindy Cohn, representing the professor, says she may seek an injunction unless Washington agrees to suspend enforcement of the rules pending a court review. UPI notes, "Bernstein developed an encryption algorithm. In ruling that his algorithm is protected free speech, the courts have extended First Amendment protection to computer code."

WebTV Had Healthy Christmas

Makers of WebTV -- the set-top box manufactured by Philips Magnavox and Sony Electronics that allows TV viewers to access the Internet -- are happy with retail sales during their first Christmas season. Writing in PC Week Online, reporter Margaret Kane notes the device was aimed mostly at Internet novices, although retailers like Raymond Navarrete, vice president of Tops Appliance City, in Edison, New Jersey, said it also sold well to computer-savvy buyers.

Said Navarrete, "There are people who said, ’My computer is in my office’ or ’It’s over in the corner.’ This becomes a product that can easily be added. It’s like buying a VCR." Kane notes neither Sony nor Philips has released sales figures for the device, "but it did make it onto the list of ’hot gifts’ put out by the International Council of Shopping Centers," adding soe retailers suggest buyers were captivated by the novelty of the device.

Adds Kane, "Installation of the device is similar to setting up a VCR. It automatically dials into WebTV Networks Inc., a Palo Alto, California, Internet access provider that charges a flat rate. Users surf the World Wide Web via a remote control, although peripheral devices, including keyboards, are offered."

PC May Revive Japanese Village

Japan is watching to see if the new year will witness the revival of the small rural village of Yamada in Toyama Prefecture after farmers there received free computers linked to the Internet. The Kyodo Japanese news service notes that earlier last summer the Yamada office distributed a free PC to each of 325 families in the 456-house village, where 350 households are engaged in farming.

"The move," says Kyodo, "is aimed at bringing significant changes to the rural community with a population of only 2,000, down from 3,000 a couple of decades ago." The wire adds that like many others in Japan’s rural areas, Yamada’s residents were hit by the government’s trade liberalization policy on agricultural products, which means Japan can no longer offer the same level of protection to its farmers, he said. Local official Harunobu Sugimoto says they might help stimulate the people by, for example, accepting distant orders for farm products through online shopping services.

Meanwhile, the wire service notes 44-year-old Isao Kurata has a more radical idea. Says Kurata, the driving force behind Yamada’s computer project, "The latest infrared modem can provide wireless access to information from anywhere in the village, even in the rice fields during work breaks." He said that although it has begun trial usage of the latest modems, Yamada will need a total of 200 transmission poles ranging up to an elevation of 1,000 meters for full infrared coverage of a roughly 40-square-kilometer area.

Kurata, who has used computers for 14 years, moved the base of his machine-design office four years ago to his home vilage and came up with the idea of introducing the Internet there. He says he now has committed himself to voluntarily visiting up to three houses every night to teach the families how to use the Internet, with the teleconferencing and other application software supplied. He said, "I want to support my home village and make it nice to live in. The farmers can live their way and preserve the land by comfortably accessing necessary information on things like markets and plant diseases."

Kyodo says the village will upload information of its own -- such as data relating to skiing and hot springs which bring the village some 1.5 billion yen in tourist revenues every year -- and aims to increase the number of its residents, especially the young, through the computer project.

Great Lakes Hot Tech Job Market

Word is the latest, greatest job market for information technology skills in 1997 is the Great Lakes region. Meanwhile, last year's hottest market -- the Mid-Atlantic region -- has slipped all the way to 7th place, out of 9 sites. These are the findings of a new technology employment survey 270 information services managers conducted by Computerworld newspaper, which adds in a statement, "With most companies increasing their spending on information technology, nationwide demand for information technology skills will continue to grow in 1997.

The survey also finds the continuing importance of the Internet and intranets in business is influencing the most sought after skills. "The hottest skills," says the paper, "include programmers experienced in HTML, which is the language used to create Web pages, Microsoft Visual Basic development tools, Windows NT operating systems, and TCP/IP networking."

IBM Creates Higher Disk Capacity

A new milestone in storing information on a hard disk is being claimed by IBM scientists who say they have developed a drive that can hold 5 billion bits of data in a square inch. The Wall Street Journal reports this morning the device could store the text of 625 novels on a single square inch of disk surface. "That's between five and 10 times the capacity of the disk drives currently used in typical personal computers," the paper adds.

Right now, the ultra-high capacity disk drives exist only in the laboratory at IBM's Almaden Research Center and at its Storage Systems Division, both based San Jose, California, but the company says it expects computers using the drives to be available in two or three years. The Journal comments, "The five-billion-bit announcement comes just a year after the company said it had developed drives with a capacity of three billion bits a square inch. A company spokesman said he expects IBM scientists to reach the 10-billion bit level by he end of the decade."

SyQuest Delivers New Disk Drive

Volume shipments of SyQuest Technology Inc.'s new SyJet 1.5 gigabyte removable cartridge disk drive are to begin this month. In Fremont, California, officials with the storage device maker told the Reuter News Service the firm already has shipped more than 90,000 units of its new EZFlyer 230 disk drive, the second of its EZ product family. Reuters notes SyQuest has seen its market share decline in the last year from new competitors in the computer storage business such as Iomega Corp., a maker of optical drives including the Zip drive. The company has been putting out new products in an effort to meet competition.

X2 Performance Data Released

U.S. Robotics has released initial performance data on its new x2 modem technology, showing that the system generally lives up to the company's expectations. The Skokie, Illinois, firm plans to be first to market x2 modems, with initial consumer products shipping later this month. A statement issued by U.S. Robotics says the company has conducted testing in 87 area codes across the U.S., with early performance data showing that the vast majority of households should be able to download Internet text and graphics at nearly twice the speed as current standard modem connections. "This early test data is based on nearly 20,000 V.34 calls placed with diagnostic software that predicts whether the connections will support the new technology," notes the company.

"Based on early testing in seven Bell operating company regions, a high

percentage of test calls to date have only one analog-to-digital (A/D) conversion in the path of the call, which is a condition necessary to connect at the higher speeds supported by x2," states U.S. Robotics. "The remaining calls would automatically fall back to V.34 operation, the 28.8K/33.6K bps modem standard widely used today.

"When x2 connections are not made, it's typically because there's been more than one analog-to-digital conversion in the path of the call," states U.S. obotics. "However, because the telephone network is evolving to a primarily digital infrastructure, most calls to trunk side digitally-connected ISP equipment have only one analog-to-digital conversion in their path."

U.S. Robotics also is in the process of obtaining Federal Communications Commission certification of its x2 products. Currently, FCC rules limit the signal level that digitally connected server equipment can transmit into the digital portion of the network phone lines. "Based on product testing to date, the result of this limitation is that the top transmission speed in the downstream link is 53K bps," says U.S. Robotics. "At higher signal levels, laboratory tests indicate that the x2 top speeds increase, with connections at 56K bps and potentially higher rates."

Apple Paid Amelio $3M for 8 Months

For eight months of work, Apple Computer Inc. paid new Chairman/CEO Gilbert Amelio nearly $3 million in salary and bonuses, according to a recent filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The Dow Jones news service reports that in comparison, Amelio, who joined the struggling computer maker last February, earned $1.3 million in the previous eight months as president/CEO at National Semiconductor Corp.

A proxy statement filed last week with the SEC says Apple paid Amelio $655,061 in salary and $2.33 million in bonuses for the fiscal year that ended in September. Former Apple CEO Michael Spindler received $939,576 in compensation and a $3.3 million severance payment when he left.

Notes Dow Jones, "Apple was losing market share and money when Amelio arrived in February. The company has since undergone a restructuring and reported a profit in its fourth quarter - six months earlier than many on Wall Street had expected. However, some of the profit was reclaimed from a $207 million restructuring charge taken earlier in the year."

Iomega Lays Off 500 to 700

Some 500 to 700 jobs are being eliminated at Iomega Corp.'s Roy, Utah, plant, as the company, a leader in portable data storage units, makes plans to shift manufacturing of its portable computer disk drives to Malaysia. Business writer Kristen Moulton of The Associated Press quotes Iomega officials as saying the move will help the company keep its costs down and prices low for consumers in the competitive market.

Adds Moulton, "Production and packaging employees at the Roy plant were told they'll lose their jobs beginning in March. The company plans job counseling, training and flexible time so workers can find other positions. ...Workers also will get severance pay and medical benefit extesions."

Iomega's headquarters and research, prototype development, sales and marketing offices will remain in Roy, where the company soon will move into a new building. The firm employed 1,900 in Roy in November. Worldwide, it had 2,800 employees, up more than 1,000 from the previous year.

Tandy Closes Computer City Stores

Tandy Corp. is closing 19 Computer City stores and relocating two others as part of a strategic plan to reposition the superstore chain to focus on the experienced user and SOHO (small office, home office) markets. The Fort Worth, Texas, retailers expects the moves will result in a $170 million after-tax charge to fourth quarter earnings. Computer City has 113 outlets nationwide.

Tandy is also exiting the consumer electronics superstore business. The company has entered into contracts with Fry's Electronics Inc. of Palo Alto, California, for the sale of the assets in six Incredible Universe stores located in the Arlington, Texas; Dallas, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona; Portland, Oregon; Sacramento, California; and San Diego, California, markets. Contracts have also been entered into to sell the six buildings and land to limited partnerships who will lease the stores to Fry's.

The deals' financial terms weren't disclosed. Fry's Electronics currently operates 10 computer and consumer electronics stores of up to 150,000 square feet in California. "The Incredible Universe concept was developed to provide a larger selection, non-commissioned sales environment and a 'hands-on' experience," says John V. Roach, Tandy's chairman and CEO. "While individual stores enjoyed success and customers surveyed had strong positives for Incredible Universe, the economic model is not viable for Tandy."

CompUSA Chief Bemoans Weak Sales

CompUSA Inc. CEO James Halpin says holiday sales were weak in the Dallas company's computer superstores. CompUSA reported a disappointing 1.5 percent increase in same-store sales in the second quarter of fiscal year 1997, which ended Dec. 28. "Retail sales in the last two weeks of December were soft and that caused a little bit of disappointment, but things go forward," stated Halpin in an interview with the Reuters news service. Halpin added that he thought holiday sales were slow because customers are awaiting next week's introduction of Intel's new multimedia MMX chip. "We think our corporate customers and a lot of our retail customers are waiting for that chip to come out on January 8," he said.

Doctors' Service to Go Online

A new online service for doctors intended to provide up-to-minute medical information is to be launched in May by a consortium of major U.S. publishing companies, including Harcourt Brace, Wolters Kluwer and Times Mirror. Reporting from St. Louis, United Press International says the Internet service will be called MD Consult, and the publishers promise it will become for doctors what the Lexis and Westlaw services are for lawyers. CEO Brian Knez of Harcourt Brace told the wire service, "MD Consult represents for us an important opportunity to meet what we believe to be the growing demand by health care professionals for online access to comprehensive medical information and services."

UPI says the partners will include Harcourt Brace's medical publishing subsidiary WB Saunders Co., Wolters Kluwer's Lippincott-Raven Publishers of Philadelphia and Times Mirror's Los Angeles-based Mosby-Year Book. MD Consult President Jerry Freeland said the service will allow the publishing companies to respond quickly to customer requests for information in different formats, adding licensing agreements have been offered to other medical publishers. When doctors sign onto the service in May, he said, they will be able to access the full contents of more than 35 medical

journals and 30 medical reference textbooks. "Also available will be a clinical reference library and access to other existing medical databases," says UPI.

Air Force Site Vandalized

Vandalized by online intruders, an Internet site operated by the U.S. Air Force was taken down this weekend, along with some 80 other sites maintained by the Department of Defense. The Wall Street Journal today noted that on Sunday morning, officials at the Department of Defense's Defense Technical Information Center noticed that someone had gained access to the Air Force's Web site and changed it from its standard fare. "Instead of the unclassified information about the military service, including fact sheets, biographies on commanders and ews releases," said the paper, "users were offered a brief sexually explicit video clip. The bogus site also claimed that everything the government says is effectively a lie."

Major Cecily Christian of the U.S. Air Force told the Journal, "Some vandals -- somebody who knows how to gain access to our computers -- was able to gain access and put pornographic pictures on our site," adding that the FBI and the Air Force's office of special investigations is looking into the incident. No other Defense Department computers were affected. The paper says the attack prompted the Defense Department to temporarily take down its 80 other Web sites to check whether they had been altered, but no intrusions were discovered. By yesterday afternoon, all but the Air Force's site was back up.

MCI Berates NYNEX Order Processing

MCI is charging that "a seriously flawed NYNEX order processing system" is delaying the ability of New Yorkers and New Englanders to switch their local telephone service to another company. "The NYNEX system fails to meet system standards established by the Federal Communications Commission," says a statement issued by MCI. The FCC is requiring local telephone monopolies to install electronic order processing systems by January 1 to ensure that customers who chose to switch their local telephone company can do so easily and quickly.

"The NYNEX system does not meet the FCC test because it is an interim plan that requires manual input from sales representatives and is not an electronic, system to system solution," notes MCI. "The manual system can lead to serious delays and errors in processing customer sales orders and other pertinent information."

According to MCI, fully automated electronic order processing system better enables companies to share information required to handle new service requests, repair calls and billing information. It adds that electronic systems also allow competitors to more quickly and more effectively resell local network capacity at a lower cost to customers.

"NYNEX is imply not preparing a system that can meet customer needs," says Donald T. Lynch, MCI senior vice president for financial operations and accounting. "We already are competing with NYNEX through our own, state-of-the-art local networks. Allowing NYNEX to use this flawed order processing system would severely limit MCI's ability to expand local competition by competing in the resale market."

Investigation of Cowboys' Irvin, Williams Ongoing

The investigation of aggravated sexual assault charges made against Dallas Cowboys wide receiver Michael Irvin, offensive tackle Erik Williams and a third unnamed suspect is continuing, but Dallas police said no charges will be filed Thursday. "Detectives are gathering and evaluating physical evidence and will be interviewing a number of individuals who may have knowledge about the allegations and whereabouts of the suspects named by the complainant," Dallas police said in a statement released Thursday afternoon. "Neither of the Dallas Cowboys named has been interviewed; no determination has been made on when they might be asked to provide statements to the police." The Cowboys visit the Carolina Panthers Sunday in an NFC divisional playoff game. It is unlikely that the investigation will keep either player from playing in that contest.

Stallings & Alabama win in final game

Gene Stallings, whose seven-year tenure at Alabama included a national title and an NCAA probation, went out a winner Wednesday in his final game, a 17-14 victory over No. 15 Michigan in the Outback Bowl. Linebacker Dwayne Rudd returned an interception 88 yards to put the 16th-ranked Crimson Tide ahead to stay. Stallings announced his resignation, effective at the end of the season, following a 24-23 victory over Auburn on Nov. 23. Stallings, 61, was 70-15-1 at Alabama and won the 1992 national championship with a 13-0 record. Defensive coordinator Mike Dubose takes over for Stallings. In other New Year’s Day bowl action, Peyton Manning threw for 408 yards and four touchdowns as No. 9 Tennessee routed 11th-ranked Northwestern, 48-28, in the Citrus Bowl. In the Cotton Bowl, Ko Kealaluhi caught a 28-yard touchdown pass with 3:39 remaining as fifth-ranked Brigham Young overcame a 10-point deficit to defeat No. 14 Kansas State, 19-15. Curtis Enis scored three touchdowns as No. 7 Penn State ripped 20th-ranked Texas, 38-15, in the Fiesta Bowl, and Oscar Davenport threw for one touchdown and ran for another to spark No. 11 North Carolina to a 20-13 victory over No. 25 West Virginia in the Gator Bowl.

Arizona’s loss set up national title game

When Florida State met Florida five weeks ago, it was for the top spot in college football. Thursday’s rematch in the Sugar Bowl will be no different. Second-ranked Arizona State fell out of the championship hunt with a heart-breaking 20-17 loss to No. 4 Ohio State in Wednesday’s Rose Bowl. The previously unbeaten Sun Devils had taken the lead on an 11-yard TD run by quarterback Jake Plummer with 1:40 to go, only to watch the Buckeyes march 65 yards to the winning score -- a four-yard scoring toss from Joe Germaine to freshman David Boston with 19 seconds left. Third-ranked Florida (11-1) is back in the picture and likely would claim the championship by beating Florida State (11-0), the nation’s only unbeaten team. The Seminoles squeaked by The Gators 24-21 on Nov. 30.

GATORS HAMMER ‘NOLES
In pursuit of Title

Third-ranked Florida staked a claim to its first-ever national championship as Heisman Trophy winner Danny Wuerffel threw three touchdown passes to Ike Hilliard and ran for another score in a 52-20 victory over top- ranked Florida State in the Sugar Bowl at New Orleans. Wuerffel connected on touchdown passes to Hilliard in each of the first three quarters -- of nine, 31 and seven yards -- and added a 47-yard completion to the receiver to set up another score. The third touchdown pass to Hilliard began a 28-point explosion that broke open a close game and enabled the Gators to avenge a 24-21 setback to Florida State on Nov. 30. The Gators also erased the memory of last season’s 62-24 loss to Nebraska in the Fiesta Bowl, a

defeat that kept Florida coach Steve Spurrier from his first national title.

Seven Letter bombs found in U.S., FBI issues alert

Seven letter bombs disguised as Christmas cards and mailed from the Middle East were found in three different locations in the United States Thursday, prompting the FBI to warn Americans to be on alert. FBI officials declined to confirm reports that they were investigating a possible connection between the cards and key figures in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and the foiled plot to bomb other New York landmarks. The FBI said none of the seven letter bombs found Thursday exploded but that they would have caused "grave harm," including death, if detonated.

Penney, Dayton Hudson, CompUSA report weak sales

Shoppers watched their spending this Christmas at some of the nation’s biggest stores, resulting in disappointing sales during the important holiday season. Providing more evidence of a weak Christmas season, J.C. Penney and Dayton Hudson Corp. reported some holiday sales that were below their own expectations. CompUSA said second-quarter sales rose only 1.5% from a year ago. After a dismal Christmas one year ago, store owners had hoped a rebounding economy and high levels of consumer confidence would ignite buying this year. In late afternoon trading, Penney was off 1-1/4 at 47-1/2, Dayton Hudson was down 1-3/8 at 37-7/8 and shares of CompUSA dropped 5 to 15-3/4. (USA TODAY)

Midsize manufacturers have yet to feel Internet’s impact

Some U.S. manufacturers believe that the Internet will continue to have little or no effect on their companies over the next two years, according to a national survey by Grant Thornton LLP. The survey found that 95 percent of the owners and top executives who run America’s midsize companies believe that the Internet is a permanent part of the business landscape. However, only 11 percent said that the Internet has had some impact on their companies. In contrast, 53 percent said the Internet has had no impact at all.

Microsoft to introduce IE 3.0 and FrontPage for Macs

Microsoft reportedly will introduce a final version of Internet Explorer 3.0 and a version of FrontPage for the Macintosh platform at the Macworld trade show in San Francisco next week. Microsoft is also expected to introduce the ActiveX Part Adapter. This new technology is designed to run ActiveX programs through CyberDog, which is Apple’s Internet application suite, and other applications compatible with Apple Computer’s OpenDoc architecture.

Commercial printing shop debuts on the Internet

The first interactive commercial print shop is making its debut on the Internet. iPrint is a self-service Internet application that makes designing and ordering printed materials as easy as using an ATM machine. iPrint is a push-button, "self-service" design environment where the consumer can see what they are creating. The iPrint technology is the first desktop publishing engine of its kind for the Internet. iPrint can be reached at www.iPrint.com.

Shareware Treasure Chest

By Lloyd E. Pulley

I've been asked if I d/l (download) and/or try all of the programs I list. The answer is 'no'. There just isn't enough time to d/l and test out all of the files. Besides that, I don't have any use for 90% of them - which doesn't mean that you won't. Take the first one on my list for example, "Wallaby". That one I did d/l and try out, and it looked like a good program. But since I'm happy with WinZip, I had no need for it. What I do is try to get a decent mix of different types of programs for you each week, whether they're ones that I like/would use or not. But there are some that I do keep and use - the Polyview graphics viewer, the Starfish Internet meter and the McAfee virus scanner to name just three.

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Wallaby - 2.5	1/2/97	2mg	Shareware $19.95

Wallaby for Windows '95 is the fastest, easiest and best way to zip and unzip in Windows '95. But thats not all - Wallaby can also create Self-Extracting EXE's - perfect for an installation/distribution, it also has a unique "Favourite Folders" which will seek out and locate your files. Wallaby is also tightly integrated with the Windows '95 shell, right-click any folder or drive and in minutes it will be compressed.

Download Site - http://www.clearlight.com/~localnet/unzip.htm

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Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Wave Events - 2.1	12/27/96	712k	Shareware $10.00

A Windows 95 utility to individually install/delete up to 12 different sound events, and their WAV file associations for any windows program. Have different sounds/sound events for different programs. Requires VB4.0 Runtime.

Download Site - http://www.waveevents.com/waveevbs.htm

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
McAfee Scan for Windows 95 - 2.08	12/27/96	2.07mb	Shareware $65

The most popular shareware virus scanner! Comes complete with ViruShield. VirusScan superior detection rates are the envy of the industry; more than 20% better than the number two market leader. VirusScan natively supports Windows 95 with an extensive array of features to keep your system immune from viruses.

Download Site - http://www.mcafee.com/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
PBTerm - 1.10	12/30/96	1200k	Shareware $10.00

PBTerm is the Windows 95 client for Paintball Net. Paintball Net is a multi-player, real-time, Internet-based game. Players deck themselves out with everything from paintball guns to scope-mounts to refracto suits (a la Predator) and run around the countryside taking potshots at other players and computer controlled ’bots.

Download Site - http://www.busprod.com/davidrm/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Image Commander - 2.0	12/27/96	1.97mg	Shareware $19.00

JASC Image Commander 2.0 is a fast and easy image viewer. It supports over 30 file types including GIF, JPG, PNG, TIF, BMP, CDR, WMF and many more! It is an excellent choice for a fast default image viewer in Windows 95 or Windows NT 4.0. Image Commander 2.0 also supports quick and easy image conversions and fast image printing as well.

Download Site - http://www.jasc.com/ic.html

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Easy Pool - 3.0 Beta 1	1/2/97	106k	Shareware $16.95

Easy Pool is a Windows 95 software program that completely automates your NCAA Basketball Pool. Grid-like screens, similar to the ones you see in newspapers, make it easy to setup and manage a pool. You can print and view detailed reports with a click of the mouse. Easy Pool now features: pick sheet printing, selectable points setup, tie-breaker entry, on-line help, right click option for instant player standings, and fax compatibility. Easy Pool can track up to 1500 player participants. A MUST for any serious College Basketball Fan!

Download Site - http://members.aol.com/easypool/index.html

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
MediaBlaze SE 32-bit - 3.2c	12/27/96	2.10mb	Shareware $20

The Internet and Intranet, powered by multimedia, are booming and you cannot afford to be left behind. There’s never been a greater demand for multimedia applications than now. Your computer needs to become a part of the revolution that is shaping the way computers are being used. The best tool to do this effectively and quickly is MediaBlaze SE. You’ll do this quickly by individually using one of the specific tabs for different media and executing the method. It’s really that simple. What makes MediaBlaze

SE effective is its seemingly unlimited flexibility. Each tab's properties and methods give you quick control over the media selected. Tabs for Images, Music, Sound, Video, CD Audio, MCI Devices and more guide you through every step.

Download Site - http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/3862/index.html

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Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Online Meter - 2.0	1/1/97	2445k	Shareware $15.00

The counter for your Dial-Up Networking connections with Windows 95. Starts counting when you connect. Tariff definition is easy to do, including special support for holidays. Moreover, the program creates a detailed log of all your connections.

Download Site - http://www.kagi.com/mkrebs/meter/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Starfish InternetMeter Inlay - 2.0	01/01/97	789k	Freeware

Watch the Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 and Netscape Navigator browsers come alive - with the InternetMeter Inlay from Starfish Software! This unique utility provides a glimpse of the technology behind Starfish Internet Utilities - the essential utilities for every Internet user. The InternetMeter Inlay embeds itself into the top right corner of your Web browser and tracks your online activity in real time. Session time, data transfer rates and connection status are all monitored - then complete details of the browser session are added to a cumulative Call Log.

Download Site - http://www.starfishsoftware.com/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
GatherTalk 32-bit - Final beta 6	01/02/97	1.14mb	Freeware

GatherTalk is a phone for the Internet. It allows interactive voice conversations around the world. GatherTalk does even more than a phone. It allows teleconferencing on Internet, even with modem connections. It can support 3 people conferencing using 14.4kbps modems and 5 people conferencing using 28.8kbps modems. No special chat servers are required, all connections are direct. This shortens the transmission and processing delays, and also allows the most valuable feature, private conferencing. i.e. You can make your own conferencing groups as you wish. This version started a concept of GatherTalk PlugIn. TextTalk and WhiteBoard are two new Plug-ins for the first distribution.

Download Site - http://www.cixt.cuhk.edu.hk/gtalk/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price

Personal Friends - 1.0 1/1/97 3630k Freeware

Nouveux Personal Friends v1.0 - Is a complete database application where you can have information about your friends, phone numbers, addresses, names in order. Personal Friends v1.0 includes a very nice phone dialer, so you can call your friends without having you to dial manually their numbers. Also you can add their photos in your database, so you know who they are. This is still a Beta but is fully functional.

Download Site - http://home.coqui.net/arios/nouveux.htm

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
PolyView - 2.80 beta	12/30/96	1300k	Shareware $20.00

PolyView by Polybytes is a shareware graphics viewer, conversion, and printing utility that has been optimized for use with Windows 95 and Windows NT (Intel). PolyView's noteworthy features are:

´• Supports most of the popular graphics image formats, including BMP, GIF, JPEG, PCX, Photo-CD (read-only), PNG, TARGA, TIFF, and many others.

´• Multithreading is used to enhance usability and allow time consuming operations, such as image file reading and writing, to be performed in parallel with user interface operations.
´• Both full screen and windowed slide shows, using specified or random ordering.
´• A wide variety of image appearance manipulation and filtering operations.
´• Highly effective interpolated zooming.
´• Sophisticated color resolution and pixel size manipulation algorithms.
´• Thumbnail and directory browsers for image file management.
´• DDE communication capabilities for convenient linking to your web browser, news reader, or HTML editor.

Download Site - http://www.kagi.com/authors/polybytes/default.html

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Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Disk PieCharter 32-bit - 2.1	12/29/96	85k	Shareware $15

Disk Piecharter for Windows 95/NT is a Graphical Disk Explorer that shows disk usage per file and per directory in a piechart. You can zoom in and out on piechart segments (directories). You can also delete files and directory trees with it. Then it immediately shows the effect on free diskspace.

Download Site - http://www.xs4all.nl/~hanszorn/diskpie95.html

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Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
HyperSnap - 2.78	12/18/96	396k	Shareware $20.00

HyperSnap brings professional quality, convenient Windows 95 and NT screen captures to your fingertips. It was designed for ease of use, with powerful and useful features to aid the professional as well as support the needs of the occasional user.

Download Site - http://www.hyperionics.com/www/snapdown.htm

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
QuickV1.0	12/30/96	1.77mg	Freeware

QuickV will view/play .wav .avi and most video formats, it will even display .bmp's (bitmaps). But it is mainly for playing .wav and .avi formats.

Download Site - http://www.specent.com/~wario/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Kali - 1.1g	12/29/96	1860k	Shareware $20.00

Kali is the largest Internet gaming system in the world with over 70,000 users and 200 servers in 33 countries. Kali supports more games than any other internet gaming system, including Apache, Big Red Racing, Command & Conquer, Cyberstorm, Deadlock, Descent / Descent 2, Doom / Doom II, Duke Nukem 3D, EF2000, Fire Fight, Hellbender, Heretic, Hexen, Links LS, Mechwarrior 2, Monster Truck Madness, Mortal Kombat 3, Nascar Racing, Network Fighter Duel (NetDuel), Quake, Rise of the Triad, Shattered Steel, Super Karts, Terminal Velocity, Top Gun, VR Pool, Warcraft / Warcraft 2, Red Alert, Master of Orion II, Heroes of Might and Magic II, Marathon 2, Hellbender, Descent95, Doom95, and others.New features include organized game launching screens for Duke Nukem, Doom, Doom2, Heretic, Hexen, Terminal Velocity, and Quake. Now supports faster game play (compression), Winsock IPX, and multiple configurations.

Download Site - http://www.kali.net/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
PowerPGP - 2.00	12/28/96	1086k	Shareware $20.00

PowerPGP 2.00 is a front end Encryption Shell for PGP. Although mainly designed for Message encryption it's totally redesigned File Encryption and Key Management interfaces make it one of the most powerful and user friendly PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) front ends available. Redesigned from the ground up PowerPGP has even more Power. Requires DOS PGP to be properly installed before trying to use PowerPGP.

With the increasing popularity of the Internet, Online Services, and BBS's more and more people are communicating electronically. After all why not? It's faster, more convenient, and cheaper. What most people don't realize is how easily someone can read their private messages. Anyone at the console of any of these systems can read your messages. Whats more it isn't even illegal for them to do so.

So... What does one do to protect themselves? You can encrypt those messages with PGP. And to make the process of doing so easier you can use PowerPGP for Windows to do it. With PowerPGP you can write you message in PowerPGP and encrypt it. After that you can cut and paste your message into any windows based e-mail program. This includes many Windows terminal programs that connect to ANSI BBS systems.

What PowerPGP is, exactly, is a windows based shell for the DOS PGP program. It makes encrypting a snap without having to know the complex command line switches required to use PGP.

Download Site - http://www.servtech.com/public/fruitcake/powerpgp.html

PowerPGP DOES require PGP to be installed properly on the system before using PowerPGP

Download Site - http://www.pgp.com/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
CYBERMAN Calculator - 1.4	12/29/96	961k	Freeware

This is a calculator we all have waiting for. Huge numbers and display and it’s freeware. Nice Icon-animated and shows different events every time you press a button!

Download Site - http://home1.swipnet.se/~w-12471/homepage.html

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Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Card File ’97 - 1.0	12/31/96	2108k	Shareware $5.00

This is a full-featured card file program that includes password protection, registry tampering detection (if someone trys to alter your win95 registry setting for Card File ’97 password or password state), changeable fonts and colors, automatic record saving, automatic opening/displaying of "default" file (this can be set by the user), file encryption for records (so no one can read your files through an ASCII viewer).

Download Site - http://www.cnsnet.net/user/lucky13/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Video Poker - 2.01	1/6/96	182k	Shareware $10.00

Play Vegas-style video poker from the comforts of your home. While this game is fun and challenging, you won’t go broke putting quarters into this game. Payout odds are based on real Vegas machines.

Download Site - http://members.aol.com/noshoes/index.htm

Name/Version Release Date Size Price

Hover Race 32-bit - beta 12/30/96 2.50mb Freeware

Multi player hovercraft racing over the internet. Rev up your racer and compete against human opponents from all around the world. Up to eight players can engage in races around different courses. It also has a convenient meeting room for chatting and setting up games with other players. The game is very quick, with a great physics model, easy to learn and intuitive gameplay, and various options such as speed up zones and weapons. And all with no lag! The game plays with no pauses or skips on a 14.4k connection. It's free, and doesn't cost anything to play. HoverRace is very easy to play with only a few keys. Furthermore, HoverRace is not violent. You won't find any blood or death in HoverRace.

Download Site - http://www.grokksoft.com/hover.html

Name/Version Release Date Size Price

See 'Em Post It Notes 32-bit - 1.0 1/1/97 .03mb Freeware

Pop an icon in your tray at startup for quick and easy access to com'puter post it notes. Viritually unlimited number of notes, each note has an alarm feature, group notes by category, easy maintenance of notes ... organize your desk, your day, your life! Resource friendly.

Download Site - http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/3519/page4.html

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Name/Version Release Date Size Price

Vosaic 32-bit - 1.0 plug-in Official Release 12/31/96 .82mb Shareware

Real time streaming of video means you don't have to wait for the whole video to be downloaded before being able to watch it. Vosaic adaptively streams MPEG1, MPEG2 and H.263 video over a wide range of transmission bandwidths.

Both high quality MPEG audio and low-bitrate GSM audio is supported, as well as a very low bitrate 3.3 Kbit/s audio. Vosaic's Video Datagram Protocol intelligently adapts to the available network bandwidth and CPU power on your machine, providing the best possible video transmission under the circumstances. A full set of control buttons enable you to play and stop, and even fast forward or rewind through the video.

Download Site - http://www.vosaic.com/

Name/Version Release Date Size Price

MidiMaster 32-bit - 6.0 beta 1 12/31/96 830k Shareware $18.99

MidiMaster is a multimedia player for Windows 95 or Windows NT 4.0 that supports MID, RMI, AVI, QuickTime and WAV formats. It is not only a media

player but also a media file organizer. It is specially designed for those who like a desktop media player which brings convenience whenever they play and manage their beloved media files. MidiMaster runs on both Windows 95 and Windows NT 4.0 as it provides specific Windows 95 GUI features. Also, users can either minimize MidiMaster to taskbar or shrink it to the TaskTray of Windows 95. MidiMaster also provides library functions for managing or categorizing media files. It has many extensive functions which make media files playing extremely simple and controllable. There are many more functions available to make your life of playing media files easier.

Download Site - http://www.cs.ust.hk/~paul/mm/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
DUNCE - 2.5	12/31/96	118k	Freeware

An excellant little utility that automatically hits the "connect to" button for you if your using Win 95’. It also will fill in your password, start other programs for you, and automatically redial your provider if the line is busy until it gets through. This is a "must" have program.

Download Site - http://www.vecdev.com/dunce.html

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Net Term 32-bit - 4.0	12/29/96	.77mb	Shareware $20

The benefits of NetTerm is in it’s ability to provide you with a DIALER, TELNET CLIENT, and support for national BULLETIN BOARDS with only one program. As an extra, NetTerm has tools to resolve host names to IP address and remove WINSOCK.DLL from memory for those with multiple TCP/IP stacks. The benefits of NetTerm is in it’s ability to provide you with a DIALER, TELNET CLIENT, and support for national BULLETIN BOARDS with only one program. As an extra, NetTerm has tools to resolve host names to IP address and remove WINSOCK.DLL from memory for those with multiple TCP/IP stacks.

16-bit version 4.0 (590kb) also available.

Download Site - http://starbase.neosoft.com/~zkrr01/netterm.html

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Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Hard Disk Sleeper 32-bit - 1.42	12/29/96	.07mb	Shareware $20

With HDSleep, you can control the Power Management of your IDE and EIDE harddisk drives even if your BIOS does not support it. This is not only a question of power saving, it significantly reduces the noise your computer makes. HDSleep enables you to define suspend times common to all drives or, apply independent settings to each of them. With the small taskbar icon and its context menus, you will control the power management just with a mouse-click.

HDSleep works with IDE- and Enhanced-IDE-compatible drives only. Do not use HDSleep for SCSI drives.

Download Site - http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/M_Wolf/hdslp.htm

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Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
PIRATES - The Quest For The Seas - 2.01	12/31/96	3.2mb	Shareware

The multiplayer strategy game of piracy and plunder on the high seas, now in it's second major release! Play with up to 5 of your friends by email, or match wits with the computer pirates. Make an honest living as a trader or plunder and terrorize the local merchants and other players. Bury and hunt for treasure, build and customize your ship, and be the master of the Caribbean. Includes tutorial.

Download Site - http://www.mountainside.com/

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
CD/Spectrum Pro 32-bit - 3.0 build 301	1/2/97	204k	Shareware

CD/Spectrum Pro has two independent parts: The CD-Audio player and the spectrum analyzer. The CD-Audio player has almost every feature you can find on any software CD player - programmed mode, intro mode, optional taskbar icon operation,auto-play, auto-exit, auto-eject, artist/track/title database, etc. It also recognizes CDP files which can save you from typing in all the track/title information for your CDs. The spectrum analyzer graphically depicts the frequency spectra of the CD music in real time. (Unless you don't have a Pentium, in which case it is *almost* real time <g>) You may use either or both of the components without effect on the other. In other words, if you don't like the CD player, you can close it and use only the spectrum analyzer, or the other way around.

Download Site - http://www.halcyon.com/gator/cdspro.htm

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
Norton AntiVirus	1/2/97	1.00mb	Freeware

January '96 definition update for Norton AntiVirus. This file is a complete replacement for any previous definitions set for all of the Norton AntiVirus products. The product list includes Norton AntiVirus 3.0 (DOS/Win 3.1), Norton AntiVirus for Windows 95, Norton AntiVirus Scanner for Windows NT, and Norton AntiVirus for NetWare 1.0 and 2.0. Note: If you have an older version of Norton then you'll also have to get this upgrade.

Download Site - http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/index.html

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price

Crescendo Plug-in - version 2.31 12/31/96 1192k Freeware

UPDATE (STR1251) - Crescendo is a Web "Streaming" music player for Netscape and Microsoft browsers that lets you listen to MIDI music as you browse a web site. Over one thousand sites already have it...and hundreds more are being added each month. "Streaming" is the ability to listen to music while it is being sent to you over the Internet. Final update.

Download Site - http://www.liveupdate.com/crescendo.html

Name/Version	Release Date	Size	Price
EditPad 32-bit - 1.31.1	1/2/97	210k	Postcardware

UPDATE (STR1251 & STR1252) - EditPad is a replacement for the standard Windows NotePad. EditPad requires Windows 95 or later to run. No additional DLLs or whatever are required.

Download Site - http://www.tornado.be/~johnfg/jgsoft.html

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Nintendo/Mario 64 STR Review A quick, to the point review

CHECKING OUT THE NINTENDO 64

By Brain M. Boucher

Nintendo 64, in summary, is a game which combines strategy and skill with amazing sixty-four bit graphics and a wide array of levels and worlds.

The game’s most obvious feature is its amazing three-dimensional graphics system. These graphics are very real, allowing the player to feel he is moving across a plane in any direction chosen. Instead of being forced to adhere to the conventional everything-is-right-in-front-or-behind-of-everything-else appearance. This gives the game most of its amazing reality, allowing the player to "see" his location, as well as his surroundings, better.

The game also has an amazing controller system. The controller itself has been specially manufactured to fit any hand. One of the things that makes conventional video games so difficult is when you need to press two buttons at once and maintain running at the same time. Usually, it takes a lot of effort and practice to do this, and in certain games, "training" can be lethal. Nintendo has solved this problem by making the multiple buttons on their sleek controller ergonomically designed to be easily reached without shifting hand positions. Another good point of the controller is the fact that movement is controlled by an analog joystick, not the traditional four button (up, down, left, and right) approach. This allows the character to move in any direcition in a range of 360´°. The joystick itself is so small it can be moved with only two fingers, and not a whole hand.

The most popular game out for Nintendo 64, at present, is Super Mario

64. This game can, at times be hard to control, but all in all, it is extremely challenging. One reason for this might be that Super Mario 64 covers a wide variety of settings, from the warm, light forest of the woods outside the castle to the freezing, slippery world of the Big Penguin Race to the watery world of the Jolly Roger Course. Mario is capable of swimming up, down, and in any other direction, including completely submerging. He reacts to different environments in fitting ways, again making the game more realistic.

In conclusion, I believe the Nintendo 64 and Super Mario 64 are the beginning of a new wave of games covering, for the first time, an extra dimension in fun and excitement. I would recommend the N64 system to all.

Watch for our special overview of the 64DD

A T T E N T I O N-A T T E N T I O N-A T T E N T I O N

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A T T E N T I O N-A T T E N T I O N-A T T E N T I O N

Edupage

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FCC RELUCTANT TO APPLY ACCESS CHARGES TO INTERNET PROVIDERS

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) says that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should not have to pay the same "access fees" that long-distance companies now pay to local phone companies for connecting long-distance calls at their initiation and destinations. ISPs are not currently paying such fees, although the local phone service companies argue that Internet usage accounts for an increasing amount of phone traffic and the phone companies are being prevented from recovering the associated costs. AOL chief executive Steve Case dismisses such arguments as a request for a "modem tax," and Intel executive Paul Misener says that Intel will submit to the FCC a paper that will "debunk Bell studies which have wildly overstated the negative impact on their network" resulting from Internet communication. (New York Times 26 Dec 96 C2)

AOL PONDERS ALTERNATIVE REVENUE SOURCES

Admitting that it will never make money charging a flat monthly fee of $19.95, America Online is considering charging extra fees for some premium services, such as online games, which would become accessible only via a separate amusement park area. "Offering something that is unique and different could be translated into being able to charge money," says the company's marketing VP. In addition to the tiered fee structure, AOL also is looking to advertising and electronic transactions for alternative revenue streams. (Investor's Business Daily 26 Dec 96 A9)

CHINA STRENGTHENS CONTROL OVER INTERNET

The newspaper called China Consumers Daily says that China plans to increase its controls over the Internet, which already include the requirement that all Internet users register with the police. In its war against pornography and "cultural rubbish," Chinese police detained more than 47,000 people and seized 320,000 pornographic products in the first ten months of 1996. Chinese authorities use the term "cultural rubbish" to include anything they consider unhealthy or politically suspect. (Atlanta Journal-Constitution 27 Dec 96 D3)

POINT. CLICK. BET.

New York's Off-Track Betting Corp. is sponsoring an experimental Web site that offers bettors the option of placing their wagers directly via their PCs. While there are many sites that focus on betting, OTB's site is the first state-sponsored race-wagering business to allow customers to bet directly from a PC -- the other sites require users to make their bets by phone. "We've been testing it internally for a couple of months," says the company's director of corporate services. "If our test is successful, we will go live to the general public, probably within a month." The New York Council on Problem Gambling sees the new development as just more of a bad thing, however: "The person never has to get up from their chair and in no time at all can lose a lot of money," says the Council's director. (Wall Street Journal 26 Dec 96 p11)

CYBER FREEWAY OFFERS FREE RIDE ON INTERNET

Hyper Net USA thinks it has found a way around the flat-pricing dilemma facing many Internet service providers today. After a one-time fee of $29.95, its Cyber FreeWay service offers free unlimited access to residents in San Francisco who are willing to provide their household demographic data. The information is then given to advertisers who target users with online ads, which are segregated in a secondary window on the right side of the screen and change about every minute or so. The service has been a big hit in Japan, home of Hyper Net's parent company, drawing more than 135,000 subscribers. (Investor's Business Daily 26 Dec 96 A8)

NEW DOMAIN NAMES ON TRACK

The Internet Ad Hoc Committee, formed under the auspices of the Internet Society, has recommended creating seven new generic top-level domains (in addition to the existing .com, .edu, .org and .net domains) as part of its "Draft Specifications for Administration and Management of gTLDs" (generic Top Level Domains). The Ad Hoc Committee will come up with the new domain names following input from the Internet community and other stakeholders. In addition, the committee has recommended the creation of 20 to 30 new domain name registrars, all of whom would compete in the second-level domain business. Organizations could compete for registrar status by plunking down a $20,000 registration fee and hoping for the best in a lottery draw. Losers would have their money refunded. In addition, the committee has recommended that second-level domain name applications be subject to a 60-day publication period before being assigned to an applicant as part of an effort to "promote accountability, discourage extortion and minimize obsolete entries." (BNA Daily Report for Executives 24 Dec 96 A15)

AIR FORCE WEB PAGE HACKED INTO BY VANDALS

The U.S. Air Force's home page on the World Wide Web < http://www.af.mil > was broken into Monday afternoon and replaced with a pornographic image, obscenities, and anti-government tirades. Identifying himself only as a 23-year-old San Diego "business man," the individual who claimed responsibility for the invasion told a reporter by telephone: "This was a complete server takeover. We literally could have dismantled all the electronic information, including e-mail." The man said that he and the individuals who participated with him in the vandalism "didn't do any damage," and claimed that, "We did it simply to show them you've got to upgrade security. The security is simply pathetic on government systems, and it's not stopping anyone. One of the people involved in the actual

break-in was only 15. A foreign government could go through that security in a few minutes." He gave himself only 50-50 odds of not being caught, and predicted: "The government is going to treat this very, very seriously. The illegality of this is extreme." The Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the Federal Bureau of Investigations are investigating the break-in. (New York Times 31 Dec 96 A9)

ENCRYPTION EXPORT POLICY TAKES EFFECT REMAINS CONTROVERSIAL

The Commerce Department has put into effect the new rules it devised to relax the restrictions on exportation of encryption software, but the computer industry says the rules are still too restrictive and will inhibit effective competition with foreign manufacturers with powerful offerings, and a lawyer for the non-profit Electronic Privacy Information Center describes the government's strategy as a "shell game," because there's "very little functional difference" between the new rules and the old ones, which had been rejected in part by a U.S. district judge in San Francisco. "They've just moved the pea under a different shell, but the rules are the same." (Washington Post 31 Dec 96)

SOFTWARE PIRATES MAKE OUT LIKE BANDITS

Data gathered by the Business Software Alliance and the Software Publishers Association indicates that the retail value of pirated software last year was $13.2 billion, up 8% from 1994. In comparison, software vendors received $15.5 billion in revenue in 1995. U.S.-based pirates accounted for the largest monetary value of illegally acquired software -- $2.9 billion -- but had the lowest piracy rate -- 26% -- of any country. Highest was Vietnam with 99%. (Information Week 23 Dec 96 p26)

NLII'S INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PROJECT

Educom's National Learning Information Infrastructure has launched a new effort, dubbed the Instructional Management System project. The goal of the project is to develop and publish standards for information management systems, creating a common mechanism for organization and retrieval of Web-based instructional objects used in coursework, and providing a framework within which individual software objects or modules can be integrated. The project will ensure that instructional software developers will have a technical standard that allows modules to be shared among institutions and across a wide range of technical environments. For more information see < http://www.iat.unc.edu/nlii/dcms/techmtng > or nlii@educom.edu. (WCET Communiquˆ' Dec 96 p22)

JUDGE RULES INTERNET OFF-LIMITS FOR CONVICT

A U.S. district judge in Florida has sentenced an online child pornography trader to a $5,000 fine, five years' probation and a prohibition against subscribing to any computer online service for the length of his probation. The U.S. Parole Commission says it's aware of only two other cases nationwide in which a judge has ordered Internet restrictions. This case is of particular interest because the sentence prompted an Ocala federal probation officer to design a software program called "Sleuth" that automatically searches hard drives and generates a complete list of files, so that probation officers can check the computers themselves, rather than calling in computer technicians to ascertain whether parolees are adhering to the terms of their release. The program has been shipped to the U.S. Parole office in Washington, D.C., and may be distributed nationally. (Tampa Tribune 31 Dec 96 A1)

CONSULTING COMPANY URGES ACADEMICS TO SELL RESEARCH

New findings from Toronto-based Mercer Management Consulting Inc. indicate that it takes 6,000 scientific findings to generate a single successful new venture. Therefore, Mercer suggests that academic research and development efforts take on a more commercial focus: "As institutional budgets shrink and outside grants become scarcer, universities have more incentive to commercialize the results of scientific scholarship... The research conclusively shows that by adopting a business-world strategy toward commercialization of scientific research, not-for-profit research institutions can capture an enormous opportunity to replace diminishing internal budgets." (Investor's Business Daily 30 Dec 96 A6)

A BROWN-OUT FOR CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

Suffering from weak consumer electronic sales this year, the Tandy Corporation is closing all of its Incredible Universe stores and 19 of 108 of its Computer City stores. The Incredible Universe stores were about five times the size of most electronics stores. Tandy's rivals are also experiencing slow-downs, and one industry analyst described the current environment as "terrible" for consumer electronics, because "they're all banging heads selling similar products." (USA Today 30 Dec 96)

IBM DEVELOPS HEFTY HARD DRIVE

IBM has developed a computer hard-disk drive capable of storing five billion bits per square inch, or three times as much as the most advanced systems it currently sells. The new drives won't reach the consumer market for several years. IBM expects that it will reach the 10-billion bits per square inch level by the end of the decade. (New York Times 31 Dec 96 C4)

WORLD BOOK TEAMS WITH IBM ON CD-ROM ENCYCLOPEDIA

IBM and World Book Inc. have teamed up to develop a multimedia version of World Book's 22-volume encyclopedia, priced at $59.99 (after a $20 rebate). The main competing product, Microsoft's Encarta, is priced at $79, but Microsoft says it's not worried. (Business Week 30 Dec 96 p6)

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INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE
The CAUSE organization's annual conference on information technology in higher education is scheduled for the end of this month in New Orleans. The conference will bring together administrators, academicians and other managers of information resources. For full conference information check out <http://cause-www.colorado.edu > or send e-mail to conf@cause.colorado.edu.

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Kids Computing Corner
Frank Sereno, Editor

The Kids' Computing Corner
Computer news and software reviews
from a parent's point of view

Quake
MS-DOS CD-ROM
rated Teen+
about $45

id Software
http://www.idsoftware.com

Program Requirements

OS:	DOS 5.0
CPU:	Pentium
HD Space:	80 MB
Memory:	8 MB
Graphics:	VGA or SVGA
CD-ROM:	for program installation and soundtrack
Audio:	8-bit sound card
Other:	mouse or joystick are optional
	network card for network play
	modem and an ISP for Internet play

review by Jason Sereno

If one of your New Year's resolutions this year was to spend less time on the computer, I would not suggest picking up id Software's Quake. Unless you have been in a hole in the ground for the last few months, Quake is

what was on almost every gamer’s Christmas list who didn’t have it already. Quake uses the interface that id made so popular with Doom, but Quake is a huge step up from that now classic game.

About the only thing that is similar in this game from the Doom series is the story: You wake up from a phone call early in the morning from your commander. It’s about the military’s slipgate device. The military was going to use the slipgate to transfer people and cargo from one place to another instantly. But it seems an enemy named Quake who comes from another galaxy is using his own slipgates to insert his deathsquads into the militaries bases to kidnap, kill, and steal.

The military starts "Operation Counterstrike" to find Quake and stop him. You are given charge of the operation. While you are scouting the neighborhood, you hear gunshots from your base. It seems that Quake has caught on to "Operation Counterstrike," and has hit your base first. You race back to the base and find that you are the only one left. You know that there is a slipgate inside the base set to Quake’s dimension. You figure that you can use the slipgate to attack Quake personally, so you pump a round in your shotgun and start the adventure.

I found the story somewhat familiar, but it did have its own unique aspects. You did notice that there is a new twist on things when id came up with the idea of slipgates. You can start out in one of four different episodes. Each one is a different dimension. To travel to another dimension, you need to get a rune that you will have the opportunity to get at the end of the dimensions. The dimensions run from 5 to 8 levels. With each dimension, there are additional monsters and with more monsters, the higher the difficulty.

You may have noticed that Quake has nothing to do with traveling into the depths of Hell, but there are certain things that do seem to be a little on the satanic side. There is a power-up that makes you invulnerable while places 666 on your status bar. But do not be alarmed, there is a section in the booklet and a readme file that comes with the game entitled "commonly asked questions." It includes a question that asks: Are you guys Satan-worshipers? The answer is: No.

Graphically, this game is unique. You may recall that Doom used the same background to show you your statistics for a level after you had finished it. Quake on the other hand, has a different background for every level. The background is a shot of the level you have just finished from a view that oversees a specific area of the level. If there are enemies still left, you can watch them walk around. You can hear the wind howl and watch the clouds move across the sky.

Quake is very graphically advanced compared to other 3D shooter games out there. (In my opinion this includes Duke Nukem 3D.) The game features very detailed graphics. Even though it is frequently dark throughout the game, you are still able to see the great detail in the textures and monsters.

The sounds are great and the monsters are placed very well in this game. For those of you who have played Doom, you may recall finding yourself getting tired of hearing imp after imp yell as they were killed. There are also very few rooms full of the same monsters like doom. Don’t get me wrong, some levels contain more than 50 monsters, but the monsters are so well placed that you rarely find yourself too overwhelmed. There is no "kill all" weapon that destroys all of the monsters in an area with one shot unlike Doom also.

All in all, if you are looking for the next step in 3D shooting games I strongly suggest purchasing Quake. If you are looking for a sexually explicit game with overrated action and graphics at a high price, then Quake will not be your choice. But if you are looking for a game with a high fun factor, excellent graphics, and a multiplayer option by modem or serial link, purchase the registered version of Quake today!

Out of 5

Graphics:	4.5
Sounds:	4.0
Playability:	5.0
Addiction level:	4.5
Overall:	4.5

Dinosaur Explorers
Mac/Windows CD-ROM
ages 4 and up
approximately $35

N-TK
18000 Studebaker Rd
Suite 200
Cerritos, CA 90703
310-403-0043
http://www.mrxsoftware.com

Program Requirements

IBM		Macintosh	
OS:	Windows 3.1, Windows 95	OS:	System 7.0
CPU:	486SX/33	CPU:	LCIII or greater
HD Space:	2 MB	HD Space:	1 MB
Memory:	4 MB	Memory:	8 MB
Graphics:	640 by 480 with 256 colors	Graphics:	256 colors, 13" monitor
CD-ROM:	Double-speed	CD-ROM:	Double-speed
Audio:	8-bit Windows compatible sound card		
Other:	mouse		

review by Frank and Jeremy Sereno

N-TK has produced another winning program in their Memorex Children’s Series. This latest addition to the Explorer series features the three friendliest prehistoric hosts this side of BarneyT. T-Bone the T-Rex, Tracy Triceratops and Squawk the Joke Bird will lead your children to many fun activities and learning games.

Here’s a min-review of Dinosaur Explorer by my son Jeremy, age 8:

You can dig for fossils and put them together. There is a fun matching game. You can collect coins to play Dino Munch. It is a lot of fun. You can also paint dinosaurs. You can shuffle body parts in the Shuffle game. The graphics are very nice. The program is easy to use, but I had some

trouble moving the dinosaur in Dino Munch. Squawk's jokes made me laugh. I really like this program.

Just the enter the clubhouse and you'll be amazed at the many selections available. Dinosaurs are divided into ten groups. Just click on a group and you'll get to see several members of that group. Each dinosaur's name is pronounced. If you click on T-Bone, he'll describe the pictured dinosaur. If you click on the dinosaur, he'll tell a funny story. These sections are informative and amusing for young and old.

The Dino Encyclopedia is a brief, but entertaining multimedia source of dinosaur information. T-Bone narrates the pages filled with graphics and music. You can even watch an interview of a museum curator. The one shortcoming that I see is that you cannot search or select a topic. You can only turn the pages of the book forward or back.

Click on the sandbox and you are transported to a fossil dig. Brush away the sand and pick open the rocks to discover dinosaur bones. When you find all the bones, you then assemble the dinosaur while it gives you hints to its identity. This portion of the program is similar to Message in a Fossil which was reviewed in this column a few weeks ago, but it certainly isn't as detailed or realistic. Jeremy really enjoyed this portion of the program. Unfortunately, this section of the program consistently crashed his computer running Windows 3.1. I didn't have time to contact technical support, but I would guess I need new video drivers. It did work fine on my computer running Windows 95.

You can access a rudimentary painting program by clicking on the crayons. The program has ten pictures that you can color any way you wish. This is a fun activity for younger children and helps teach them how to better use the mouse.

More activities can be found in the bookcase. You can play a matching game that lets players match dinosaur pictures or match dinosaur pictures to the creatures' names. You'll have to pay attention to the learning portions of the program to match the names to the pictures because many of these dinosaurs are uncommon. Another activity is Shuffle-o-saurus. Here you can mix and match dinosaur parts to make your own creations. You can even hear the pronunciation of the names of your customized dinosaurs. This will really entertain younger children. The final activities in the bookcase are the puzzle games.

Jigasaurus is the easiest of the games. The puzzle starts out blank. You are to place the pieces on the puzzle, but as you move them over the puzzle a red square appears and that is where the piece belongs. Dino Scramble is more difficult. In a small square you can see the completed puzzle, but on the puzzle board the pieces are mixed up. You must move the pieces into the correct locations to match the original puzzle. The most difficult and entertaining puzzles are in Questasaurus. The puzzle board is covered with answers. You will be shown a small square from the puzzle, but you must answer a question to place the piece correctly. This a great learning exercise that is fun too.

The Prehysteric Cartoons are available by clicking on the TV. You can choose from three movies. The first is a Superman short in which he fights a prehistoric monster. The second movie is a Daffy Duck short in which a

caveman tries to capture him for breakfast. The third movie is a compilation of many movie sequences set to an original song. While younger children may be entertained by these shorts, they have little educational value.

One activity remains. Click on Squawk the Joke Bird and you can hear some prehistoric humor. These puns and riddles are suitable for children ages 4 to 8. The jokes are funny and they keep your children entertained. The riddles will make them think a bit.

Dinosaur Explorers has an excellent interface. The packaging declares "no parents or manuals are necessary" and I believe them. Each activity is explained at the start and you can click on the host to have the instructions repeated. The sounds, music and graphics are excellent. The program features a myriad of fun learning activities that should entertain your children for months. I will have to say that I would not recommend this program for children older than ten as they would probably be more interested in facts that could be learned from more serious offerings. In conclusion, Dinosaur Explorers is an easy-to-use program that will entertain and educate children ages four through ten. It is very reasonably priced and a good addition to your child's software library. Be sure to come back next week when we will review The Magic School Bus Explores in the Age of the Dinosaurs and I will compare all three dinosaur programs reviewed in this column.

Special Notice!! STR Infofile File format for Articles

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All articles submitted to STReport for publication must be sent in the following format. Please use the format requested. Any files received that do not conform will not be used. The article must be in an importable word processor format for Word 7.0.. The margins are .05" left and 1.0" Monospaced fonts are not to be used. Please use proportional fonting only and at eleven points.

´• No Indenting on any paragraphs!!
´• No Indenting of any lines or "special gimmickery"
´• No underlining!
´• Columns shall be achieved through the use of tabs only. Or, columns in Word format. Do NOT use the space bar.
´• No ASCII "ART"!!
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´• Actual Artwork should be in GIF, PCX, JPG, TIF, BMP, WMF file formats
´• Artwork (pictures, graphs, charts, etc.)should be sent along with the article separately
´• Please use a single font only in an article. TTF CG Times 12pt. is preferred. (VERY Strong Hint)

If there are any questions please use either E-Mail or call. On another note. the ASCII version of STReport is fast approaching the "end of the line" As the major Online Services move away from ASCII.. So shall STReport. All in the name of progress and improved readability. The amount of reader mail expressing a preference for our Adobe PDF enhanced issue is running approximately 15 to 1 over the ASCII edition. Besides, STReport will not be caught in the old, worn out "downward compatibility

dodge" we must move forward. However, if the ASCII readership remains as high, rest assured. ASCII will stay. Right now, since STReport is offered on a number of closed major corporate networks as "required" Monday Morning reading.. Our ascii readers have nothing to worry themselves about.

Many grateful thanks in advance for your enthusiastic co-operation and input.

Ralph F. Mariano, Editor
STReport International Online Magazine

Gaming Hotwire STR Feature - The World of Contemporary Gaming

Featuring the Action from;

"Video Gaming Central" on CompuServe

ZONE 2 STR Review For the Playstation

ZONE 2

Ctsy CIS, VG Central
What a difference a year makes! Konami shocked the sports gaming world last year when it introduced an action packed, 3D polygonal based basketball title. Against some formidable competition, Konami's In The Zone went on to become a tremendous success. My only reservations with Zone 1 were that the game didn't feature all of the NBA players, there wasn't a simulation mode, the graphics were a little choppy and some of the announcing was out of line. Other than that, Zone 1 played like stink.

Because of this, NBA In The Zone held it's own against strong basketball titles from both Electronic Arts and Sony. Well, now it's round two and Zone has returned with better graphics, all of the players (save a few), simulation modes (featuring full seasons and playoffs) and sharper commentary. In every way, NBA In The Zone 2 completely towers over the memory of the first game Konami has created a remarkable franchise here, gamers. Let's hit the hardwood to take a look.

The graphics for Zone 2 are awesome. Not only are all of the NBA team courts and uniforms represented extremely well, but each of the virtual players actually has a physical resemblance to his NBA counterpart. There are definitely going to be moments during this game where you'll have to blink to make sure you're not watching the real thing.
The player animation of Zone 2 not been created using motion capture tech, so you will notice some unnatural choppiness in the movement, but the animators have done a truly marvelous job of recreating the glide and slide of the sport. However, as clean and articulated as the player movements are in Zone 2, they still don't hold a candle to the player animation of NBA Live 97. So I think it'd be a safe bet to say that next year's Zone will be sporting motion captured flash.

I didn't really care much for the set up interface of this game. There's nothing in the pre-game screens (or the opening cinematics) that had me

more impressed than last year's b-ball titles (not to mention Live 97's). Straight forward team select and player creation screens shouldn't be enough to cause you to look away in horror, however, so don't think for a moment that I was even remotely discouraged with the visuals of this title. When I look at the graphics of a b-ball game, it's only the on-the-court action that really counts.

The action in NBA In The Zone 2 is excellent. Passing, shooting, stealing and dunking are all effortless. The tangible and intuitive control you have over your current on-screen character is spell binding. Perhaps because the animation isn't motion captured, you do get the feeling that action-reaction is as quick as synapses shooting through your noggin. Trust me, hoops fans, you'll smile lots.

But...

There's a severe problem with the computer controlled artificial intelligence of In The Zone 2. The player you're controlling and his opposition maneuver like a dream but when you play a one player game, you'll quickly discover how lazy the computer controlled players away from the ball are. I didn't notice it at first, but when I did, I nearly fell out of my chair - everybody that's not in the immediate vicinity of the basketball stands around like they're waiting for the bus!

Compare this to the always in motion, continuously working players of NBA Live 97 and I think you'll agree with me, Zone 2 is a different kind of hoops than the stuff we watch on Sunday afternoons. If I were a GM of one of the teams in Zone 2 and I saw this kind of inactivity, there'd be a whole lot of firing going on after every game. It's kind of a bummer when you play solo, because it's so easy to tear it up past the computer; however, multi-player games come off brilliantly, thanks to your friends' constant, adrenaline inflected player motion.

Another gripe... Quick 'round-the-key passes to try and break the double teams are frustrating because for some silly reason, the speed of the pass is almost identical to the speed of your opposing players. No matter how hard you try to whip it to your teammate, the double team finds its way there to stop you from getting the easy step. Dishing to players sprinting for the net is also a pia because of these weak passes.

There really should have been some way to add pepper to the round ball so the smarter, offensively minded layer could rightfully take advantage. I found this lame attempt to keep the defense comparatively matched up (when was the last time you played a basketball videogame where the defensive equaled the offensive?) to the offense interminably annoying. After all, if I can beat the computer with my mind, I should have the ability to defeat the computer with my speed on the simulated court. I didn't like having that ability taken away from me.

On defense, Zone 2 positively dominates. The ability to pounce on a player and block his weak school yard jam is very rewarding. That concussive slap and the sputter of the ball is one of the most enjoyable things you can get out of your PlayStation. Make sure you practice up on squaring against your offensive threat - you won't regret it.

Zone 2 introduces some new key features to the control this time out. A turbo (or Power) button has been added which gives your slam master a little bit of added juice to take it to the hole. Also, on-the-fly defensive and offensive formations (basic, basic plays) are also achievable at the press of a button. And then there's that lovely action

button. Last year, the action button was effective for snaking past defenders by spinning or dribbling through your legs. This year that action button plays a part in the glory of the highlight footage. Reversals, 360 slams, through the legs double clutch jams and some highly impressive monster dunks are all part of the hysteria. Get comfortable with that button.

The music of Zone 2 echoes some of the stuff you heard in last year's title but there's definitely a whole lot more funky diversity. Tunes pop in through the arena's loudspeakers whenever things slow down a little. And the between play music does get groovy in its own right. I wasn't blown away by the musical soundtrack of this game but I wasn't insulted either. For those that need a comparative note, the music here doesn't hold a Bic lighter to the super swell sounds of Live 97 but considering the amount of experience EA Sports' b-ball musicians have, how could you expect it to?

The squeaks and squawks of high priced high tops on hardwood have been eloquently captured in this title but some of the other real life sounds don't fare quite as well. The rather violent smacks of stealing the rock and slapping it away are on the cartoony side of simulation, but the roar of the fans and the echoing chords of rah rah tunes make up for them. Nothing really out of order in the sound F/Xdepartment, so don't be afraid to blast it.

The attempt here was to provide the best of all worlds in a basketball simulation. Konami came so close to perfect it's scary. Look out for the chance to hear the national anthem sung in a number of different ways, or stand back as you watch the consummate player intros (you can tell who's who by their faces - even MJ). This is a game developed by people who love the game; that's easy to see.

I was impressed by the ability to let your players take the hit (and then the resulting foul shot) when they go up for jumpers. I also loved the animation of fade aways and show time dunk fests. This year, the replay doesn't have to pop up after every basket but don't be surprised if you want it to; this is one pretty game to watch. I would have liked to have seen "Player of the Game" screens at half time and at the end of a game and a little more on-screen data (Chicago's on a 6-0 run - that kind of thing) would have rocked, but these are quibbles.

The Best?

No, NBA In The Zone 2 is not the best basketball game I've ever played. I'm still trying to figure out if that honor goes to NBA Live 96 for the Genesis or Live 97 for the PSX. The lack of mobility from the computer controlled players; the easy to beat AI; the slow as molasses passes; and the lack of motion captured animation are the determining factors in my not raising a blue ribbon above Zone 2.

However, that being said, I do have to admit that there are very few basketball titles, or sports titles in general, that can even come close to being as instantly captivating and addictive as this game. With Zone 2, Konami has permanently cemented a place in my best sports games of all time list. The company has raised the bar on b-ball graphics flash and speed (except for the passes) and has created a franchise that will no doubt live on for years. As far as I'm concerned, as of today, there are only two serious contenders for your PlayStation basketball dollars. In The Zone 2 is one of them.

In The Zone 2 9 out of 10

Classics & Entertainment Section
Editor Dana P. Jacobson

From the Atari Editor’s Desk "Saying it like it is!"

1997. Where did this past year go?? Well, there’s no use worrying about it; we have a new year with all kinds of potential - let’s look ahead to it. Hope you all had an enjoyable and safe holiday.

Like last week, this is another slow week for news. Most places are shut down for the holiday and not much is happening between Christmas and New Years. This year is no different. About the only news worth noting this week is that Albert Dayes, formerly of Atari Explorer Online magazine, has recently joined us. Albert will be helping us out with both PC and Atari articles. We’re glad to have him with us and look forward to seeing his name in print again.

Until next time...

Gaming Section

Towers II & Breakout 2000 Tips!
Nintendo 64 X-mas Sales!
PSX Sales! Who’s #1?

From the Editor’s Controller - Playin’ it like it is!

Towers II and Breakout 2000 continue to dominate the Jaguar news. Both games are still being discussed heavily on the Usenet and various online services. We haven’t received our review copies yet, but we have managed to get a copy of Towers II gratis from the folks at JV Enterprises. I’ll be getting that out to one of our reviewers shortly (if I can stop myself from playing it long enough to mail it out!). It’s a fun game to play, reminiscent of my days of being monopolized with Dungeon Master and Chaos Strikes Back.

Most of the Jaguar news in this week’s issue relates to tips and information for the latest two games - from the respective programmers. Interesting stuff, especially if you’re in the need.

The other ongoing gaming news revolves around the sales figures from Sony and Nintendo. Both companies have claimed terrific sales figures, but we’ll wait for the neutral sources before taking anything for granted. Regardless, I believe that the consumer base had a terrific holiday season with systems and games to choose from, albeit that the N64 was a lesser player in that regard. Nintendo had good sales of a limited system and games, while the PlayStation had terrific sales with plenty of machines and tons of games to select.

Until next time...

Nintendo 64 Breaks Records

Nintendo 64 is the fastest-selling video game system in the company's history, says Redmond, Washington, officials with Nintendo of America. Hardware and software sales for the system have averaged more than $5 million a day since its Sept. 29 launch. Nintendo Vice President Peter Main told United Press International the 64's fourth quarter sales were 1.6 million units, with a retail price of $199.95 each, adding that for those Christmas shoppers who were unable to find the unit, the company plans to ship another 500,000 to 700,000 systems between Jan. 1 and March 31.

Said Main, "With a half billion dollars in total revenue in just three months time, Nintendo 64 became a sizable industry all by itself," adding the product launch helped reinvigorate the entire video game sector.

Nintendo 64 Systems Led US Christmas Sales

KYOTO, JAPAN, 1996 JAN 2 (Newsbytes) -- By Martyn Williams. Nintendo Co. Ltd. [TOKYO:7974] said its new Nintendo 64 games system led Christmas sales in the United States. In a news release, cutely datelined from the North Pole, the company claimed sales of 1.6 million from its September 29 launch to Christmas Day. The company said this made the system the hottest toy of the holidays, outstripping even "Tickle Me Elmo," which is reported to have sold around a million units. The company, which had forecast shortages in the period to the end of the year, said it forecasts sales in the three months to March 31 to total 500,000 to 700,000 systems.

The Nintendo 64 is competing with Sony's PlayStation and Sega's Saturn in the next generation game console market, but came to market much later than its competitors. Sony launched the PlayStation in Japan in December, 1994, and in the United States in September, 1995, while Sega entered the market in Japan in November, 1994, and in the United States in June, 1995. In contrast, Nintendo joined the battle in June, 1996, in Japan and September, 1996, in the United States. Its delay cost the company dearly, as could be seen when it announced financial results for the first half of fiscal 1996, April to September 1996. Current profits fell 53.0 percent to 30 billion yen, and sales dropped 3.7 percent.

The Nintendo 64 launch will do much to help turn this situation around, but Nintendo will need more than cute press releases to win the battle, analysts tell Newsbytes. Worldwide PlayStation shipments totaled nine million units at the end of October, making it the leading system, wellahead of Sega's Saturn, at 3.5 million units. Nintendo is now concentrating on developing a wider range of software titles to encourage sales. Over 40 new games were recently on show at "Shoshinkai," a Tokyo exhibition of Nintendo-related software and hardware.

The company also received a boost from Time Magazine when it named the Nintendo 64 its "1996 Machine of the Year," a category that covers the entire consumer electronics industry. Nintendo said the magazine judged that its console, "has done to video-gaming what the 707 did to air travel."

OK, here’s the first cheat code for Breakout 2000.

At the beginning of a level (before either player launches a ball, but after the bricks have been placed) press the 1, 3 and 5 buttons. A confirmation tone will sound and you will be given 99 balls to complete the phase. The ball count will be reset to 5 at the beginning of the next phase.

-- Mario

Towers II Hints!

1a. How do you unlock the gold doors on the first level?
1b. I am wandering around the first 3 levels, and I can’t go farther?

A. Custodians have the responsibility of cleaning up all of the rooms in the tower. Try talking to them about keys. If they don’t respond topleasantries, well you know what to do next!

2. I’m on the 2nd level in the chain room, what order do I pull the chains in?

A. One of the thieves gives you a hint on which chain to pull first. You know what chain to pull last by looking at the punctuation of the phrase on the scroll. Then it’s just a matter of finding out which order to pull the other two chain levers in. Remember, it’s a poem. If you make a mistake, you can always pull the rest chain, and try again.

3. There are 3 Iron Golems, guarding an entrance, that I can’t kill! How do I get past them?

Those Iron Golems are pretty tough. In fact, chances are that nothing you possess right now can even hurt them. So, our best advice it to leave them be; at least for now.

4. What do you do with those tornado looking creatures (air elementals), they are not effected by anything?

They are made of air, everything goes through them. You need to find a spell that can affect air. Talk to the thief, down a pit, in the earth elemental area. You know, earth elementals, those creatures with no legs that hit really hard! Don’t forget to make sure you have a way back up the pit, or you’ll be trapped just like the thief.

5. I fully charged the mace, but there is a door in the water elemental area that I can’t unlock?

When you teleported into the library, there was a scroll that talked about the mishap on the upper levels, and how it was resolved. It read in part, "... Using the Mace, I have sealed the only exits to those floors. The Mace of Elements, which alone can unlock the door, has been drained..."

More Towers II Hints!

1. How do you unlock the gold doors on the first level?
2. I am wandering around the first 3 levels, and I can’t go farther?
3. I’m on the 2nd level in the chain room, what order do I pull the

chains in?

4. There are 3 Iron Golems, guarding an entrance, that I can’t kill! How do I get past them?
5. Is there a trick to getting rid of the boulders in the Earth Elemental Room?
6. What do you do with those tornado looking creatures (air elementals), they are not effected by anything?
7. How do you remove the sword from the boulder in the Fire Elemental area?
8. I fully charged the mace, but there is a door in the water elemental area that I can’t unlock?
9. I have been eliminating the creatures in the undead level, and I have come across several Bleached Bones. What do I do with them?
10. I am finding pieces of a sword, what do I do with them?
11. Niniane, keeps asking for a diamond, black pearl, and bloodstone. Where do I find them?
12. I made my way to level 8, and I have not been able to progress further. What do I do?
13. How do I open the gate on level 8, after the secret door?
14. Salvon does not seem affected by anything that I possess. How do I get rid of him?

1. How do you unlock the gold doors on the first level?

Custodians have the responsibility of cleaning up all of the rooms in the tower. Try talking to them about keys. If they don’t respond to pleasantries, well you know what to do next!

2. I am wandering around the first 3 levels, and I can’t go farther?

In the throne room, behind the gold doors, is a locked secret door. No key will unlock that door, but there is something in that very same room that will.

3. I’m on the 2nd level in the chain room, what order do I pull the chains in?

One of the thieves gives you a hint on which chain to pull first. You know what chain to pull last by looking at the punctuation of the phrase on the scroll. Then it’s just a matter of finding out which order to pull the other two chain levers in. Remember, it’s a poem. If you make a mistake, you can always pull the reset chain, and try again.

4. There are 3 Iron Golems, guarding an entrance, that I can’t kill! How do I get past them?

Those Iron Golems are pretty tough. In fact, chances are that nothing you possess right now can even hurt them. So, our best advice it to leave them be; at least for now.

5. Is there a trick to getting rid of the boulders in the Earth Elemental Room?

The four plates on the floor act as combinations to open up all the passage ways, two steps at a time.

6. What do you do with those tornado looking creatures (air elementals), they are not effected by anything?

They are made of air, everything goes through them. You need to find a

spell that can affect air. Talk to the thief, down a pit, in the earth elemental area. You know, earth elementals, those creatures with no legs that hit really hard! Don't forget to make sure you have a way back up the pit, or you'll be trapped just like the thief.

7. How do you remove the sword from the boulder in the Fire Elemental area?

You must talk to another thief, this time down a pit in the domain of the Air Elementals.

8. I fully charged the mace, but there is a door in the water elemental area that I can't unlock?

When you teleported into th library, there was a scroll that talked about the mishap on the upper levels, and how it was resolved. It read in part, "... Using the Mace, I have sealed the only exits to those floors. The Mace of Elements, which alone can unlock the door, has been drained..."

9. I have been eliminating the creatures in the undead level, and I have come across several Bleached Bones. What do I do with them?

These bones are the remains of the council members of Lamini. You must find a way to bring them back, so that you might gather some information from them. The scribe mentions foul green liquid that Daggan used to raise the dead. Find it, and bones will be no more.

10. I am finding pieces of a sword, what do I do with them?

There are three pieces of the Holy Sword, which you must mend. Sir Mordred makes reference to the "raw energy" that was created by Salvon as he tried to break free of his imprisonment. This energy can mend the sword.

11. Niniane, keeps asking for a diamond, black pearl, and bloodstone. Where do I find them?

Back in the Elemental's domain, there are diamonds and pearls with the Earth Elementals and Bloodstones with the Fire Elementals.
12. I made my way to level 8, and I have not been able to progress further. What do I do?

You must be struck by two forms of energy to unlock the secret door. The only place where this can occur, is the same place where you activated that energy. Then you must find the secret door, which is marked between lights.

13. How do I open the gate on level 8, after the secret door?

Jared has the key. Did you revive him?

14. Salvon does not seem affected by anything that I possess. How do I get rid of him?

Salvon cannot be hurt by anything, except the Holy Sword and Aura of Death. You cannot advance until Salvon is banished once again.

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ONLINE WEEKLY STReport OnLine The wires are a hummin'!

PEOPLE... ARE TALKING

On CompuServe

Compiled by Joe Mirando
CIS ID: 73637,2262

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, it looks like we've all survived yet another year and are (hopefully) none the worse for it. As a went about my business today, most folks decided it would be a neighborly thing to do to ask what my New Year's Resolution was.

The first time I was asked, I simply said, "I didn't make one." Which happened to be the truth. I've long since given up making promises to myself that I know I'm not going to keep.

The second time I was asked, I replied, "I'm going to hack into the IRS computer and make sure that everyone in the country gets a refund." This is quite a bit above and beyond my capabilities but the cool thing about being a "computer person" in a world of computer-person-wannabes is that they never know for sure if you can do it or not. Rest assured, Mr. IRS Commissioner, I cannot.

The third time I was asked, I got a bit ticked off about it. It seems that people are not only not interested in their own resolutions but they take it as a sacred task to find out what your was. I answered, "I'm going to go around and choke the life out of everyone who asks me what my New Year's Resolution was." The fourth, fifth, etc. times, I didn't answer at all. Then I started to think that perhaps I should have made one. But what should it be? World Peace? An end to world hunger? Shelters for the homeless in every city? All worthy causes, to be sure. But since my red cape was lost in a dry cleaning accident, I have little hope of attaining any of these. I decided to set my sights a bit more realistically and decided that, sometime in 1997, I will get a web browser for the Atari ST series of computers to work for me. Those of you who know me, and those of you who read this column with any frequency, know that I've been messing about off and on with several of the available Atari-flavored web browsers... all with no or little success. Let's hope that changes in the near future.

Now, let's get to the reason you read this column in the first place... all the 'stuff' (yes, it's a computer term) to be found every week right here on CompuServe.

From the Atari Computing Forums

Jon Hartmann asks:

"How do I connect my atari to compuserve?"

The Big Kahuna himself, Sysop Ron Luks, replies:
"There is no Atari software for CompuServe (CIM). You'll have to use generic ASCII telecomm software to access this system."

Albert Dayes tells Jon:
"You can use any telecommunications program that supports VT-100 and a external hayes compatible modem and that should be it."

Dennis Bishop adds:
"It doesn't have to be vt-100, I'm using Flash 1.6 in Atari and I have my CIS settings set for vt-52."

David Trigger asks:
"Can anyone please point me in the direction of usable fax software for a 1040ST? I'm new here and trying to find my way around."

Our own workaholic, Dana Jacobson, tells David:
"I'd recommend STraight Fax, a commercial product. You can get it at most dealers such as Toad Computers."

Michael Pappas asks for help:
"I've been downloading a lot of zipped files from this forum and I'm having a lot of problems unzipping it. I need a good unzip program that'll work with the files on here. If anyone knows of any good unzipping programs for the ST, please let me know."

Albert Dayes tells Michael:
"ST-ZIP v2.6 seems to work well with everything I throw at it. If that fails there is stunzip which a much older version."

Jack Hughes adds:
"As Albert said STZIP2.6 works very well. However, I have been having problems lately. I use a shell program (EDM Shell) to do the hard part of uncompressing files. Of late it has told me "no files found" but a listing shows they are in fact there. Therefor I have gone directly to STZIP and successfully unzipped all files. Zip 2.6 is itself a zipped file. A Catch 22."

Paul Malcom asks:
"Does anyone know how to get a comms prog to access Compuserve without getting garbage across the screen? The only prog that works so far is QuickCis but I want to use STarCall or FZDT. Any help would be much appreciated."

Sysop Bob Retelle tells Paul:
"The usual cause of "garbage" when you log into CompuServe is having your communications settings at "8N1"... which actually is the correct setting for an Atari, but which causes CompuServe to send ASCII characters with the high bit set, thus resulting in what looks like random garbage. The usual solution is to check your telecommunications program for an option which is usually called "Strip High Bit", or "Strip 8th Bit" and turn it ON .That should eliminate the "garbage"..."

Doug Howatt tells Bob:
"Thank you for the advice, about strip 8bit it will save me from pulling out the little hair I have. I have been very frustrated with my terminal program."

Joe Villarreal tells Paul (and all telecom users):
"I haven't tried Starcall but have used FZDT extensively. Select Strip 7th emulation and have it configured as 8 bit,1 stop bit, and no parity; you need to have it configured like this in order to download files."

Albert Dayes adds his preference (and mine):
"I use FLASH 2 and it works fine for me. I have never used the telecommunications programs you have mentioned however."

On the subject of using a 1.44 meg floppy drive on an ST, Curt Vendel posts this to Marcos Sanchez:
"I'm not an ST expert (I owned a Mega STe for a while) I'm more of an 8bitter myself, but if I do recall, check your ROM level, I think you have to have TOS 2.06 to properly use 1.44" drives, this may or may not be correct."

Having researched this very subject before I purchased my last computer, I tell Curt:
"You are quite correct. TOS 2.05 was SUPPOSED to be the first version to allow 1.44 MB disks, but somehow that portion of the code didn't work reliably (from what I remember). TOS 2.06 (in an ST/MEGA/STE/MEGA STE) or higher (TT or Falcon) must be used to use 1.44 meg disks. The Western Digital Floppy Controller chip must also be replaced with the "Ajax" chip, which provides the correct signal speed for 1.44 drives. In STE/MEGA STE machines, it's a simple plug 'n' play operation. In an ST/MEGA, there's some re-wiring and additional hardware (I think) that needs to be put in. Needless to say, this is best left to a professional.... unless you like sweating. <grimace>"

Curt replies:
"Aha!!! That would explain why I could use a 1.44 on my Mega STe, very interesting."

In the Atari Gaming Forum Steve Watkins asks:
"Isn't Iron Soldier II still a CD ROM? I wonder what per CD cost they could manufacture them at... considering the teeny-tiny Jaguar CD base. Still, should be much less risk than carts."

Larry Tipton tells Steve:
"The last word was that it is CD based -- lots of FMV sequences. But the game itself looked pretty much like the original -- with NO network play. I suppose it could be either way. Cart or CD. The last I heard was that there were less than 10,000 CD units sold."

Daniel Skelton tells us about his experiences with CDs:
"From the experience we had putting together the "Supercharger" CD for the 2600, it is possible to run less than 500 CDs for about $5.00 each. Cost is minimal compared to carts. These were commercially-produced CDs with two-color artwork, not CD-Rs. Of our $18/unit selling price, well over half the cost was from the high-resolution manual with multicolor covers, not to mention that pesky packing and postage.

So it's possible for a CD to be created with a low user base, sporting a high-quality manual with color covers, for less than $15 in media creation costs. This, of course, does not include man-hour costs for layout, programming, etc., because in our case those services were provided by volunteers. Any CD game should be more easily producible than a cartridge-based game. That only 10,000 CD units sold limits the potential customer base too severely, though, to choose CD over Cart if the game can be released in either form."

Steve Watkins tells Daniel:
"Sure, we know they're far, far cheaper than carts. The real question is can they even sell CDs in an amount that will be worth the effort? There is a (starving, desparate) core still going strong, but I think the vast majority of Jaguar (CD) owners probably already moved on... ??? [It] makes a big difference, not so much in raw bucks to have your man(woman)power doing the project, but also in having them NOT doing other things. ...The question is do you go for a tiny potential market of Jaguar CD owners for little cost and little return, or do you go for the much, much larger cart base and less profits? I think if they sold anything close to 10,000 CDs they'd be pulling off a miracle."

Friend to all Atarians, Don Thomas, asks Daniel:
"Do you guys have an official release date on that CD?"

Daniel tells Don:
"I don't think we had an "official" release date for the Supercharger CD. We basically just started shipping the minute every item was complete, and did not have anything as formal as a real release date. In related news, I now understand from reading my e-mail after the holidays that the entire pressing of 350 copies has sold out, so there are no more available at the current time. If we are able to get agreement from Atari and Bridgestone Multimedia Inc., the two companies which own aspects of the Supercharger game copyrights, we may be able to press additional copies; however, none are anticipated at this time, and making a move toward pressing additional copies would be driven by Glenn Saunders, who produced the project and has handled distribution and publicity."

On the subject of the much anticipated BattleSphere from 4-Play, Larry Tipton posts:
"...here is something from our friend Thunderbird...

BattleSphere Update 12/28/96

Hey there BattleSphere Phanatics! The wait is drawing to a close. Gauntlet Play Mode is now in Playtesting, and I must say that it RULES!!! Never before have I met such a challenging shooter game in my life! (Well... maybe Tempest 2000). But it's great!!!

The levels start off pretty easy for me (I'm an expert) but the ememy gets smarter and stronger as you go. Some levels require a great deal of strategy as you're outnumbered and outgunned. Careful planning of when and where to use your special weapons is crucial.

The level bosses are particularly fun and challenging, and really make the time fly by. Finding the weakness in these guys is going to be a real challenge! It took me 90 minutes to get through one particular level and I know the achilles heel already (heh heh heh) you guys are gonna love this.

Watch out now that the enemy AI is programmed to use special weapons on you. Some of you complained a while back that some of our special weapons were not particularly useful, right? Well, you'll be singing a different tune when you discover how "INeffective" they are when the enemy is using them on you. (Don't cry to me.)

At any rate... if you finish all 100 levels of Gauntlet, you will indeed be a supreme BattleSphere champion.

In other news, our nifty new introduction which tells the story of the game is completed, which really spiffs up our Attract Mode. There's even some cool easter-eggs in that sucker.

There's a couple of other things new too, but I can't tell anyone about them ;-) Let's just say we have another "first" for Jaguar games!"

[Now, anyone who's read STReport for more than a very short time knows that there is often animosity between the folks here and the folks at 4-Play. I've always done my best to stay away from it, but we all understand that we are known by the tags at the end of our online signatures. I'll tell you quite truthfully that I can't wait to play this bad boy! Most of it will probably be well beyond my abilities, but it does sound hot!]

Larry Tipton posts:
"...There seems to be a lot up unsold CD units floating around. If they drop below $50 I'll probablly pick up a second unit. The demand for good CDs should be high at least for the folks that have the CD Unit. Rumors are now appearing claiming that Iron Soldier 2 will come out on CD and a scaled down version will appear in cart form about two months later. Have you heard this rumor?"

Craig Harris tells Larry:
"$49.99 at Nobody Beats the Wiz."

Well folks, that's about it for this week. It's time for me to go work on my New Year's Resolution <grin>. Be sure to tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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